

THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Reviewing Stand

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Why Vacations?

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System

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Why Vacations?

MR. BUCHANAN: Why should we take vacations?

MR. VAN DUSEN: I would like to have a little vacation every day.

MISS ROSS: The best page in my childhood copybook had at the top, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

MR. PARKER: I asked my barber that very question this morning. His reply was, "I want to get away from it all."

* * * *

MR. BUCHANAN: In the spring a young man's fancy may turn to love, but at the approach of summer any man's thoughts turn to a vacation. That may be a vacation from school... a vacation from work... the chance to get away from it all.

Is there really a need for vacations, though? Is there some reason—except for the pleasure derived—for this relaxation? And how can you best benefit your mind and body by a carefully planned vacation?

When you speak about these short vacations, Mr. Van Dusen, do you imply that we can make up our real vacation period from many little periods?

A Vacation Every Day?

MR. VAN DUSEN: By a little vacation every day I mean an opportunity to change your pace and get a little relaxation which permits you to return to your work with renewed interest. It may be just a little period between tasks or it may be a short holiday. By no means did I mean to imply that I wouldn't enjoy a longer vacation period, too.

MR. BUCHANAN: I don't think Miss Ross would disagree with that. Miss Ross, when you speak of "all work and no play," is the reverse also true?

MISS ROSS: Oh yes, there is a rejoinder to that, Mr. Buchanan: "All play and no work makes Jack a mere toy." [laughter]

I suppose what we are after, really, is a proper balance between work and play—enough play, as Mr. Van Dusen says, to enrich the work, and enough work—well, just to be practical—to get the wherewithal for the play.

MR. BUCHANAN: When you speak, or perhaps I should say, when your barber speaks about getting away from it all, Mr. Parker, do you or he mean that we must leave our home town or our work and go traveling for a vacation?

MR. PARKER: Not necessarily. I think rather it means a change of activity, although a change of scene certainly would seem desirable at times.

'Relaxation Is Essential'

But I would like to take issue for just a moment, if I may, with Mr. Van Dusen. As I understand his definition, perhaps, of a vacation, he would say that any short rest period is a vacation. Now, would that not mean that sleeping at night, then, is a vacation, or that a rest period in your workday is a vacation or, indeed, a holiday?

MR. VAN DUSEN: I think to some extent that I would go along with that. But, I believe you are right, Mr. Parker, we should clarify what we mean by a vacation.

I think that over-all, whether we are talking about short rest periods, brief holidays, or those two or three week periods that have commonly been called vacations, that the process of relaxation—getting away from the monotony of the routine day-to-day activities—is essentially the same.

MR. PARKER: I am glad to hear you

say that word, *monotony*, because I think there is a distinction between, say fatigue and boredom or monotony.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I would agree with that.

MISS ROSS: So would I.

MR. PARKER: My thought is that your rest period, your sleep, or your holiday, is surcease from fatigue, a chance to rebuild the body, to recuperate from the poisonous substances of fatigue in the blood stream; whereas a vacation, a more formal sort of thing where you take quite a long extended period, is relief from boredom, a mental attitude, if you like.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I am always impressed, however, by how much more tired I get in so much quicker time when I am doing things that fail to interest me; and, if I can shift gears, get on to the task I am more interested in, I seem to be able to come back to the task that I may be obligated to do with renewed interest. And I think that may be tied up with the business of, shall we say, a shot in my attitude, or a relief from the boredom of the task that I don't enjoy.

On and Off Job

MR. BUCHANAN: I think everyone would agree with that, but how is the man who has a job—let's say on the assembly line—to switch to something more interesting?

MR. VAN DUSEN: There I think I would like a little vacation every day. I think an opportunity off the job for a little creative activity is appropriate. The man may be a sportsman; he might participate in a little softball after he gets off that four o'clock shift—some task where he can actively engage in a finished job. When he gets through the ball game he knows he had a part in it; whereas on the job he might not see the end product at all.

MR. PARKER: Actually that ball game, whether golf or whatever he does for recreation, might be just as fatiguing as the work itself.

To partially answer your question, Mr. Buchanan, about the man on the assembly line, many of them do have vacations while they are working, by projection or day dreaming while on the job. It seems to be a necessity on some jobs.

MR. BUCHANAN: Can't that become rather dangerous?

MR. PARKER: Definitely, it may be the basic cause for some accidents.

MR. BUCHANAN: Well, then, how can we solve that problem?

MR. PARKER: This is quite another subject, I think, Mr. Buchanan, on relief of monotony.

Fatigue and Boredom

I would like to distinguish, if I may, between this thing called fatigue and boredom, so we may be all talking about the same thing.

As I understand it, fatigue is associated with physical depletion; whereas boredom is a concomitant of mental dullness. Or, you might say fatigue is a decreased *capacity* for work; whereas boredom is a decreased *interest* in work. There is quite a distinction there.

MISS ROSS: I would like to add that boredom itself can create physical fatigue, as some of our psychological studies have demonstrated.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I think that is important to remember.

I always enjoy being tired after having done a job I like. But I somehow always regret being worn out after completing a task that I didn't enjoy.

MR. BUCHANAN: Then, what we are saying is that our physical attitude and mental attitude are linked in one fashion or another.

That leads me to a question, Miss Ross. What about the person who finds it a little hard to relax, whether it is on a vacation or otherwise, because he has so much to do? He hasn't been able to accomplish enough; he has a guilty conscience about relaxing.

MISS ROSS: You are right, Mr. Buchanan. Sometimes people can't even allow themselves to have any fun. That's one of the best things about a vacation. One of my psychiatrist colleagues says that the best part about a vacation is that it is a sanctioned regression.

MR. BUCHANAN: I beg your pardon. A *sanctioned regression*? I won't stand for any of these fancy terms. I like to know what you are talking about.

'Sanctioned Regression'

MISS ROSS: I don't blame you, Mr. Buchanan. I just said that for fun. I will explain. A sanctioned regression is a permission to play, to be a little childish, if you want to in your play, give up some of your monotonous responsibilities and to have fun, to let go, to relax.

Perhaps one of our chief difficulties in this country about vacations is that we have that leftover of the Puritanic ideal: To work is to be good; the man who works the hardest is the most virtuous. Now, we have to get a kind of permission, don't we, to let the people feel that they have a right to have a vacation and to stop working so hard.

MR. PARKER: You think, then, I gather, that leisure is something like money, Miss Ross. The one who is customarily without either one has to learn how to use it profitably.

MISS ROSS: Surely, it isn't easy sometimes to shut off the thoughts that have been bothering you all day, and you really have to get permission from your own conscience, you might say, to indulge in other activity.

MR. PARKER: In other words, it isn't a vice to play, if we play wisely?

MR. VAN DUSEN: I think that is a good thing to remember in using our leisure, in enjoying a vacation that is due us, or actually taking a trip, it is wise to leave our troubles behind. If we can, we should solve our problems before we go. Is that not right, Miss Ross?

MISS ROSS: But it isn't always possible, remember, Mr. Van Dusen, particularly if we are taking that vacation—we are afraid—at the expense of somebody else's leisure.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I see.

MR. PARKER: If you take your worries with you on your vacation, then you don't vacate. Isn't that about right?

MISS ROSS: True enough. You know you can work harder on a vacation than you can on your job.

MR. BUCHANAN: Or, as the popular song goes, "Leave your worries on the doorstep." It is easy to talk about, but how do we do just that? What benefits does a person get from a vacation?

'Leave Your Worries'

MR. PARKER: The most obvious is that one gets a physical rest on a vacation. I seriously doubt that benefit, however, because some of us work a lot harder doing things on vacation—playing golf or riding horseback or swimming,—than we do on the job. Perhaps mental relaxation or recreation—to *re-create* the mind or body or attitudes would be more to the point.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I know one family man, for instance, who is busy from day to day on his job. He really looks forward to the vacation period when he can, as he puts it, become re-acquainted with his family. With a group of growing children and a man who is awfully busy on the job, it is sometimes hard to know your children as well as you would like and for your children to know the man of the family. Those holidays and those vacation periods are wonderful opportunities to get together again.

MR. PARKER: Isn't it conceivable that a man or wife might need a vacation from each other, Mr. Van Dusen?

MR. VAN DUSEN: I think so. We believe that in our family at least.

MISS ROSS: Yes, and parents need a little relaxation from the children, and

the children, you know, need a little relief from the parents.

MR. BUCHANAN: I think that just about covers the field.

From the other side of the fence, what does an employer find about vacation periods, Mr. Parker? Is it worth-while for him to allow his people to go away for a while and come back refreshed?

Employer and Vacations

MR. PARKER: Very definitely. I think it is interesting to trace for just a moment the history of vacations. Actually, we know that at the turn of the century, fifty years ago, very, very, few firms had vacation policies at all. The Bureau of Labor Statistics claims that only about 253 plants in the whole United States granted paid vacations at that time—and most of them only to special executives as a privilege. But that has been extended vastly in the last few decades, and today we find that more than 90 per cent of manufacturing firms are granting paid vacations to employees.

Now, there is a reason behind that. It isn't just "do-gooding" that causes the employers to give vacations. They find it increases productivity, improves morale, and, consequently, efficiency.

MR. VAN DUSEN: In other words, Mr. Parker, what originally started out to be a gift now becomes a real asset to many firms.

MR. PARKER: Exactly, like so many other things that started out as a privilege, it has now become something of a right. And we find union organizations negotiating for the right to have a paid vacation. Indeed, we find, if you take the shorter work week or rest periods or even paid holidays, that there was a paternalistic aspect about it at first—it was a gift given as a privilege by the employer and he expected in return certain gratitude from the employee. Rarely did he get such gratitude. In fact, it is contrary, as we know, to human nature to give

gratitude for something a person feels he has earned.

And so the curious evolution is that, despite the fact that he didn't get his gratitude in his paternalistic way, he got increased efficiency instead. And so today most employers have realized that they themselves are the gainers if they give vacations to their employees.

MISS ROSS: I would like to say a word in relation to the individual, especially the one who has creative ability. (Probably all of us have more creative ability than we realize, and it would come out if we didn't have to do so much monotonous work.) All those people I know who do artistic work, or who are dependent upon very deep thinking and long hours of work find that a period away from that work often produces the most astounding results. In other words, they are working while they are resting.

MR. VAN DUSEN: In spite of the fact that we are aware that there is plenty of monotony in all of our lives, we should remind ourselves that we all have a lot more leisure than we formerly had. In order to use our leisure time more successfully we ought to plan for it more than we usually do.

What About Housewife?

MR. BUCHANAN: Don't you contradict yourself when you say that? Leisure to me is just doing something I enjoy. I don't want to sit down and say, "Next week from the hours of seven to eight I may conduct myself this way." It may be psychologically right, but I would rather run out to see a show when the time comes.

MR. VAN DUSEN: No, I am thinking about the kind of thing every housewife runs into. Think of the difference of gadgets the modern mother has to work with as compared to what her mother had. She has all kinds of conveniences. But I dare say you would not find many current mothers who would tell you they had a lot of time on their hands.

MISS ROSS: And I am thinking about the children, who, after all, have a

good deal of monotony in their lives, particularly during the school year—when they have to get up at a certain hour—and they look forward to doing things a little differently.

MR. VAN DUSEN: Even if it is a matter of washing dishes in some neighbor's house, when they wouldn't like that task at home. Is that right?

MISS ROSS: That's right. You can do a lot of things away from home and they are interesting, while they are terrible drudgery when they are in your own kitchen.

MR. PARKER: If we were to define vacation as a change of pace, as Mr. Van Dusen suggested, I should think the average housewife had a good many changes of pace during the day, and therefore a good many vacations.

How Much Can We Do?

MR. VAN DUSEN: Don't you think we get ourselves into a lot of jams by taking on a lot more than we should? Some wise old Dutchman said that it is a good idea to plan your day at the beginning, and then work your plan every day. But I have found and I think my wife has, too, that by starting off with a plan we have too many things on the list. By the end of the day we have made such a small dent in it we wind up feeling fatigued, and, shall we say, in Mr. Parker's term, fairly bored with our task. Maybe a better approach would be just simply to take the first two things on the list and when we have accomplished them, feel pleased about it. And, if there is marginal time left, maybe we will accomplish something else we didn't expect.

MISS ROSS: That's awfully good advice, Mr. Van Dusen, because, I am sure when you are doing item No. 2 you have your mind on the remainder of the items on the list, and you are using up tons more energy than is necessary.

MR. BUCHANAN: That may be good advice, but I can't believe that if

you stop at the end of the second task, you are going to be pleased with what you are doing.

MR. PARKER: No, it seems to me that would be more frustrating. I would be concerned about the eight items I didn't get accomplished and would think I would have been very unsuccessful to have accomplished just two of them.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I suppose we are looking for a compromise. Suppose we pitched our tent in such a way that we really felt we were going to accomplish two significant things and then get started on those other things.

MR. BUCHANAN: Or, Mr. Van Dusen, could we put it this way: If you accomplish only two, don't feel frustrated that evening and try to do four and five more instead of enjoying a bridge game.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I think you may be right.

MISS ROSS: My advice is to do one of two, tear up the list, or do the remaining one you enjoy most.

MR. PARKER: How does that lead you to leisure? Are you saying, Miss Ross, that leisure is just as vital to our pleasure and our adjustment as is work?

MISS ROSS: Yes, I am. I think all nature proves that to us. We are awake part of the day; we sleep part of the day. The whole rhythm of life demands expenditure of efforts and relaxation.

MR. BUCHANAN: We have wandered just a bit from the vacation period. Mr. Parker, in your advice to employees and employers, do you think it is better to plan a vacation rather carefully?

Anticipate and Remember

MR. PARKER: That brings up a very enticing question, because there are some people who get more enjoyment out of anticipating and planning a vacation than the actual vacation it-

self. I think it is a matter of individual differences. Personally, I like things to happen to me spontaneously, and so I would like to have surprises on my vacation and don't care to plan them too definitely. But I am not certain that is true of some other members of my family.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I have been guilty of this sort of thing: I save up for a vacation and then start out for a good deal of sports. Then on the first day I practically kill myself from over-exertion and find that I have to take the remainder of the week to recuperate from that first day. Sometimes I think that a little planning is in order.

I would agree with Mr. Parker that you should leave plenty of room for spontaneous activity, but, at least if you are going to climb mountains on your vacation, it is a good idea to start somewhere else several weeks in advance to condition yourself.

MR. PARKER: I can give you a more painful experience than that. I spent 20 minutes in the direct rays of the Florida sun and was in bed with sunburn for four days after!

MISS ROSS: We musn't forget when we talk about planning for a vacation and all the anticipation of the fun that another part of the good side of the vacation is remembering all the things that happened. As a matter of fact, I know we remember them a little grander than they actually were during vacation—like fishing, you know.

MR. BUCHANAN: Adding one or two inches to that bass you caught!

MR. PARKER: That is somewhat of a dream-like experience.

Who Can Afford Vacation?

MR. BUCHANAN: It is all right to talk about vacations for people who can afford them from a monetary standpoint and from the standpoint of time. Mr. Van Dusen, what about the executive—let's say a newspaper editor who must put his paper to bed every night? He can't make up his paper ahead; he can't look ahead for the news? How

can he take a vacation?

MR. VAN DUSEN: I don't happen to know any newspaper editors personally, but some of the most successful executives I know have given me the idea that they follow this pattern. I have seen them actually plan for peak periods of the day, and also actually plan for little relaxation periods. For instance, a number of them just anticipate that at a certain period in the morning or afternoon they will go out of their own office and chat informally with others and pass the time of day—that sort of thing.

MISS ROSS: You remember when Churchill was under the period of greatest strain during the war he said—if you read his book—"I realize that every day as soon after two o'clock as possible I must take a long nap."

Lapses Into Relaxation

MR. VAN DUSEN: I think that is good advice. But, of course, we don't find many people taking naps in our way of life, in the busy executive's life. But you find time and time again when, in spite of the fact that the man will tell you he doesn't have time for this or that—the fellow seems to be continually on the ball—he does have little lapses of relaxation.

MR. PARKER: You used, Mr. Buchanan, the term, *executive*. It seems to me that a good executive would have an understudy. I think no man is indispensable on any job, and so a good executive would have an understudy who could step in and take his place. If he properly plans his work year, he should allow for vacations so that he would be at his best when he returns. Perhaps we might suggest that some employers and employees are afraid to take a vacation because the boss may find out they can get along without them.

MR. BUCHANAN: I don't think that the executive was the only one I had in mind, Mr. Parker. The same thing may be true of a man whose salary is not large enough to travel and get away from work if there isn't a paid

vacation. Can he find surcease in some other activity?

MR. PARKER: Don't you think we can find good peace of mind and peace of body at home sometimes instead of traveling? We don't have to spend a lot of money to have recreation in these days.

MISS ROSS: There are lots of people who have all their recreation in the evening in the garden.

MR. VAN DUSEN: I have a little garden myself. Of course I have trouble finding time to get there once in a while, and it is entirely different from anything else I do.

MISS ROSS: I would like to say one word, Mr. Buchanan, about times of emergency and how the human organism rises to meet all the strains of emergencies without need of rest. But as soon as the situation, the strain lets up, then the body demands its rest. After all, nature itself is very wise and tells us what to follow.

Right or Wrong Job?

MR. BUCHANAN: I understand, then, there is a relationship between mental attitude and physical attitude, and while we may be working ourselves to death physically, we may still enjoy it mentally.

I think of the story I read—I think the locale was in India—in which a couple of Englishmen set up a tennis court and were out batting the ball around and having a wonderful time. But they became very fatigued. And two of the Indians who were watching asked why the Englishmen didn't hire two Indians to play the game for them so the Britishers could sit and watch!

If we like what we are doing, is it work?

MR. PARKER: No. One of the tragedies, one of the great social wastes, seems to me to be that, according to our best estimates, about two-thirds of all the people who work in America are in the wrong job.

MR. BUCHANAN: Two-thirds— isn't that a very high figure?

MR. PARKER: It *is* a high figure. I don't mean to imply that two-thirds of the people are failures, but I mean that about 60 or 70 per cent of the people are in work which is not best for them. Their aptitudes are such and their interests are such that there are other things they can do more effectively—and that they would like to do better. Liking to do a job has a lot to do with your attitude towards that job.

MR. VAN DUSEN: Doesn't that make the participation in sports, hobbies and secondary kinds of activity all the more important? It seems to me that an individual who may not be gaining a great deal of satisfaction through the day on his job finds it almost necessary to get into some kind of activity on his own where he can taste those satisfactions of success that we all enjoy and that give us a lift. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that, if an individual is in a situation that he enjoys off the job to the extent that he can gain these psychological satisfactions, he will return to his job much happier the next day.

MR. BUCHANAN: What do you mean by psychological satisfactions, Mr. Van Dusen?

'We Need Attention'

MR. VAN DUSEN: I know it is hard in many industrial and business set-ups for a man or a woman to always feel that he or she is an integral member of the team. We would like to feel all the time, I believe, that we really belong to the unit that we are in. If you can't belong on the job, maybe you can belong in some kind of social activity off the job.

Another thing, I think, that we all would like to have is a certain amount of attention. It isn't always easy for supervisors and executives to dole out the attention to the people on the job. But off the job it may be fairly easy

to get into situations where we can get that kind of need satisfied.

MR. BUCHANAN: You mean the worker who might be the leader on his bowling team?

MR. VAN DUSEN: Exactly!

MISS ROSS: And sometimes I think our vacations are even more pleasant when we are doing some work in relation to, but not directly concerned with our regular jobs. There our two fields of effort meet, and sometimes sparks fly and new ideas develop and we come back to our other work refreshed, even though we have had quite a period of work of another kind.

'Split Vacation'

MR. PARKER: In other words, just variety of work is sometimes an improvement, even though both are hard work?

MISS ROSS: It certainly is.

MR. BUCHANAN: That would lead to the one thought: How many vacations should we have a year. If we are all agreed that vacations are valuable, what is the point at which we should cease? Perhaps we shouldn't work at all?

MR. VAN DUSEN: I said I would like a little vacation every day. But we

see evidences in business and industrial setups, that more and more we may be coming to the viewpoint that splitting the allotted vacation time into several different units might be appropriate—for instance, a vacation in the winter and a vacation in the summer. We haven't much experimental evidence that this is the best, but from informal reports we learn that a great deal of satisfaction is being expressed by many people who split vacation times into different units.

MR. BUCHANAN: So that it would depend entirely, then, on the individual and the employer—obviously we couldn't go to the point where we do no work at all!

MR. PARKER: And it depends upon the nature of work, Mr. Buchanan. I think most authorities agree that two weeks is about a minimum amount of time for rehabilitation to take place.

MR. BUCHANAN: I would think from what you have said here that the psychological and medical factors underlying a vacation are very important and related.

Without worrying too much about the whys and wherefores, if all of us would just determine that we need a vacation and enjoy that vacation we would probably accomplish all you have suggested.

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How Much Does Worry Affect Your Life?

Vol. XI, No. 23

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Can You Manage Your Mind?

Vol. X, No. 5

Available for 10 cents each in coin

Suggested Readings



Compiled by Laura R. Joost, Assistant,
Reference Department, Deering
Library, Northwestern University



BENEDICT, AGNES E. and ADELE FRANKLIN *The Happy Home: A Guide to Family Living*. New York, Appleton-Century, 1949.

Includes concrete suggestions for planning creative activities, sports, trips, vacations and parties.

BENJAMIN, ROBERT S. *Vacation Guide*. New York, McGraw, 1940.

Where to go and what to do on a vacation in the United States.

GREENBIE, MARJORIE L. *Arts of Leisure*. New York, McGraw, 1935.

How to get the most out of leisure time—whether it be plain loafing or a vacation.

HINES, DUNCAN *Vacation Guide*. Bowling Green, Ky., The author, 1948.

Good plans to spend an enjoyable vacation—winter, summer, spring or fall.

MILLS, CHARLES *Vacations for Industrial Workers*. New York, The Ronald Press, 1927.

Policy and practice of workers' vacations in industry throughout the world.

National Industrial Conference Board, Inc. *Vacation and Holiday Practices*. New York, National Industrial Conference Board, Inc., 1946. (Studies in Personnel Policy no. 75)

Examinations of industries' practice in granting annual vacations with pay.

WRENN, CHARLES GILBERT and DUDLEY LEE HARLEY *Time on Their Hands*. Washington, D.C., American Council on Education, 1941.

Considers the leisure needs of youth against the backgrounds of modern social changes.

American Magazine 143:vacation number 1947.

Articles on vacations and vacation plans.

Holiday Magazine

A monthly magazine that entices the vacationer, by way of good pictures and interesting comments, to the world's pleasure spots.

Hygiea 25:587, Aug., '47. "V is for Vacation." W. W. BAUER.

An editorial which tells us that the two essentials for a good vacation are (1) to get away from the job and (2) to get a genuine change of activity.

Industrial Arts and Vocational Education 32:192-93, May, '43. "Coming Vacation Days."

Suggests that everyone, and especially teachers, should consider that a vacation can and should furnish mental as well as physical growth.

New York Times Section 10:May 10, '49. "Vacation Preview, 1949."

Where to go and what to do, summer vacation 1949.

Parents Magazine 23:27+, July '48. "Vacation at Home and Like It!" J. M. COKER.

How one family had a grand vacation together and at home—the result was a closer family relationship and renewed energies for all.

Personnel 25:48-54, July, '48. "The Practical Negotiation of Vacation and Holiday Clauses." H. A. LIEN.

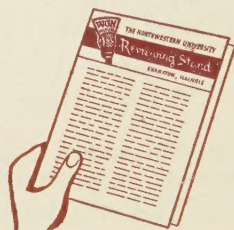
Consideration of vacation clauses to be written in contracts between labor and management as to (1) vacation schedule, (2) eligibility requirements, and (3) computation of pay.

Recreation

A monthly magazine devoted to the recreational needs of people of all ages and in all occupations.

Saturday Review of Literature 32:56+, April 16, '49. "Pasteurizing the City Citizens." H. SUTTON.

Notes on plans whereby city citizens can have relatively inexpensive vacations on farms.



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